



NOAA Backgrounder

SPRING 1999 WARMER AND DRIER THAN NORMAL

During spring 1999, the United States was warmer and drier than normal. Based on preliminary data, spring 1999 did not set a record for the contiguous United States overall, but the nation did average warmer and drier than normal, according to the nation's official climate archive, NOAA's National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C. Meteorological spring is the three-month period of March, April, and May.

A WORD ABOUT NOAA. . .

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major organizations: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program units. In addition, NOAA research and operational activities are supported by the Nation's seventh uniformed service, the NOAA Corps, a commissioned officer corps of men and women who operate NOAA ships and aircraft, and serve in scientific and administrative posts.

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With an average seasonal temperature of 52.1° F (0.5° F above normal), spring 1999 was the 31st warmest such season since records began in 1895. The normal spring season temperature for the contiguous United States is 51.6° F. The warmest spring on record was 1910 (54.7° F); the coolest spring on record was 1917 (48.1° F).

With a national averaged precipitation of 7.17 inches (0.59" below normal), spring 1999 was the 33rd driest such season since 1895. The normal spring season precipitation for the contiguous United States is 7.76 inches. The driest spring on record was 1925 (5.32 inches), while the wettest spring on record was 1973 (10.14 inches).

Regional Wrap-up:

March-May 1999 was the 10th warmest spring season on record for the East-North Central Region, which includes the states of Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

Spring 1999 was the 10th warmest such season since 1895 for Wisconsin, the ninth warmest spring season on record for Maine, and the eighth warmest spring since 1895 for Rhode Island.

To the opposite extreme, the Northwest Region, which includes Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, was cooler than normal with a rank of 25th coolest.

It was the 21st coolest spring on record for Oregon, 22nd coolest spring for California, and the 23rd coolest spring on record for Washington.

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March-May 1999 was the 12th driest Spring since 1895 for the Southeast Region. This region includes all states from Virginia to Alabama.

Spring 1999 was the sixth driest such season on record for Georgia and the seventh driest spring since 1895 for Ohio.

To the opposite extreme, the East-North Central Region was wetter than normal with a rank of 15th wettest.

It was the 12th wettest spring on record for Kansas and the 15th wettest spring on record for Oklahoma.

Despite the well-publicized recent tornado outbreaks, preliminary data suggest that spring 1999 was only the fifth most active such season on record for tornadoes. For the three-month period, 495 tornadoes have been documented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This compares with a 1953-1998 average of 347 for the same three-month period. The most spring season tornadoes was recorded in 1991 with 700 ; the spring season with the fewest tornadoes was 1958 with 159. ☹

For further information, please contact Patricia Viets, NOAA Public Affairs, at 301-457-5005, or visit our Web site at www.ncdc.noaa.gov.

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